

MARY AND HENRY SCHIPMANN

An Interview Conducted by
Sarah Germain

April 21, 2003

For The
Department of Human Services
of the
Township of North Brunswick
North Brunswick, New Jersey

INTERVIEW: Mr. and Mrs. Schipmann

INTERVIEWED BY: Sarah Germain

PLACE:

DATE: April 21, 2003

GERMAIN: My name is Sarah Germain, and I am interviewing Mrs. and Mr. Schipmann. Today is April 21, 2003. How are you?

HENRY SCHIPMANN: Fine.

GERMAIN: What is your full name?

MARY SCHIPMANN: My name is Mary Schipmann. My maiden name was Raydlick[sp?].

GERMAIN: And you?

HANK: Mine is Henry Schipmann, and that hasn't changed.

GERMAIN: Do you know why you were named Henry and Mary?

HANK: I was named after my father.

MARY: My father wanted very simple names for us children so we wouldn't get nicknames. So Mary turned in to Mar, and it's always been Mar.

GERMAIN: As your nickname?

MARY: Yes.

GERMAIN: Do you have a nickname?

HANK: Hank is the nickname.

GERMAIN: Where were you born?

MARY: We were both born St. Peter's Hospital in New Brunswick.

HANK: Well, it was Middlesex Hospital as I knew it. But it changed over to St. Peter's. It was directly across the street from the present--

MARY: Where Robert Wood is today, where St. Peter's High School is today, was the old hospital.

GERMAIN: Where did your parents work?

MARY: My father worked for Mack Motor Company in New Brunswick and also in Plainfield. My mother, of course, was a stay-at-home mom.

HANK: My father worked for Armour and Company, and it used to be on Handy Street over by _____. He was the refrigeration engineer,

kept the meat cold.

GERMAIN: And your mother?

HANK: My mother didn't work.

MARY: Mothers didn't work in those days. That's the new mothers that work.

GERMAIN: Did you have any siblings?

MARY: I had a brother and a sister, both are deceased.

GERMAIN: I'm sorry to hear that.

HANK: I had twin sisters and a brother. I have one of the twins, _____, still alive. My brother's in Florida. He's not happy there anymore. But they had a good life.

GERMAIN: Did you get along?

MARY: Like regular siblings do. We had our ups and downs, but we were very close.

HANK: Good days, bad days, you know.

MARY: We've stayed close all our lives.

HANK: We did a lot together. There wasn't that much to do, really. During the summer we'd walk from home to Dallaback[sp?] Sand Pit to go swimming. You tell people that today, they say, "You walked that far to go swimming?" Walked almost everywhere.

MARY: We either walked or rode our bikes, and there was no limit. We went all over the place because there was no traffic then. It was easy. I used to ride my bike over to Buccleuch Park, no problem. As long as you came home before the men started coming home from work. But we went all over the place.

GERMAIN: Did you and your family spend certain days or times together?

MARY: Always, we were always together.

HANK: Yes.

MARY: Holidays, everything. We were always together.

HANK: Togetherness is what it was all about, right.

GERMAIN: Everything was family-oriented?

MARY: Mmmm hmmm. In our family it was.

GERMAIN: Where was your favorite vacation spot to go with your family?

MARY: My grandmother had a little cabin up in the Poconos, and we went there every summer. We would go for a vacation when we were kids. We would go and--my kids went; my kids loved it. Of course it wasn't right away; there was a period of time that they went. The government bought it up, putting in a dam on the Delaware, and it was supposed to be Tocks[sp?] Island Dam, of which nothing came of it, but they had bought all the property up. So that was the end of our cabin days. But we loved it.

HANK: We never had that many vacations. The vacations that we did have was in my younger years when we went down to the Shore, and we camped on the beach. We'd put on an awning off the car, and that was your sun shield and also in case it decided to rain, whatever. And we slept on the sand. No special place.

MARY: It wasn't like camping is today.

GERMAIN: Did you have any pets?

MARY: We always had a cat. Always had a cat. We did have a dog. But there was no place to keep a dog so we sent it out to a farm.

HANK: We always had a dog and a cat. We have three pets now.

MARY: Our girls raised five dogs for Seeing Eye. Right now we have two adopted Greyhounds and a cat. Always have a cat.

GERMAIN: So you like pets.

HANK: Oh, yes.

MARY: Yes.

GERMAIN: Did you name them specific names?

MARY: The Seeing Eye puppies came named because they have a litter, and they start all with the same letter of the alphabet. So we had Biscuit, we had Posie, we had all--but we've never named them. But the Greyhounds-- One of my favorite movies is *Pretty Woman*, and Julia Roberts's name was Vivian. So we have a female dog that's Vivian. And the male dog--we do volunteer work down at the Princeton Battlefield State Park. That, of course, is where General Mercer was killed, well, wounded severely, on the battlefield. The house is a museum, and they have the room where General Mercer passed away. So our male dog's named Mercer. And the cat is named Sitka because that's the closest I'm ever going to get to Alaska.

GERMAIN: Was there open communication between you and your parents?

MARY: Yes, definitely.

HANK: Usually, yes. You didn't have to-- I mean you did something, you talked with your parents. If you knew it was wrong to do, you told you parents about it.

MARY: We were a very close family. I thought everybody lived like we did until I got out in the world and then realized that people had differences. You know, we weren't all the same.

GERMAIN: Did you have any chores that you had to do around the house?

HANK: Yes. Mine was to take out the ashes, the ashes from the heating boiler because we were burning coal. You took them out, and you sifted them out. The pieces of coal that didn't burn, you put back into the bucket and took it down the basement again so you could give it a second chance at burning. We used to cut the grass. And, you know, we'd take care of the dog or the cat, whichever; somebody would take turns. That's the way it usually worked out.

MARY: My job was every Saturday morning I had to clean the kitchen floor. We didn't have a mop. You cleaned the kitchen floor, and the kitchen ran into the foyer which was by the front door. So it was a big long stretch, you know, that had to be-- usually it would last. You could do it week by week. Sometimes it had to be done in between. But we had to take care of our own rooms, keep our things in order, various things. We'd go to the store. The store was across the street practically. No big ____.

HANK: We had to make our beds, too, that sort of thing.

MARY: Yes, I mean that was....

GERMAIN: Where did your family buy food?

MARY: Well, like I say, there was a Privett[sp?]'s Market was across-- We lived on Woodland Avenue, and Privett's Market was catty-corner over on Lee Avenue. My mother on Saturday mornings would call in an order, a grocery order, and they would deliver it. That was before the supermarkets, you know. Always that's the way we got our groceries. If we ran out of bread or milk or something in between we'd just walk over and get it.

HANK: We shopped at a couple of small stores. The meat portion of it my father brought home from where he worked. We would take a trip to go shopping together. We always had a chance to stop

and get a double-dip Tompkins ice cream if we behaved ourselves.

MARY: Tompkins on French Street was very well known. I think it may be the only ice cream place in the area. And sometimes Sunday afternoons if we'd go for a ride, we always stopped at Tompkins on the way home--before you came home.

GERMAIN: Is it still there.

MARY: No.

GERMAIN: Where did you buy clothes.

MARY: We would go into New Brunswick for clothes. Ride the No. 14 bus right down Livingston Avenue to Georges Street, and we shopped at-- There was a Nathan's and Roselle's, Rosenthal's, P.J. Young's, Wolfson's. There were a lot of clothing shops in New Brunswick at the time. Everybody did that. Everybody shopped in New Brunswick.

HANK: It was nowhere near the way it is today. We did some shopping in New Brunswick, we did some shopping in Milltown. It depended on what we wanted. I did a lot of shopping at what was known as Cheap John's down on Hiram Street.

MARY: It's not Cheap John's anymore. Now they just call it

John's, and he's out on Hamilton Street, New Brunswick. There was a store in New Brunswick, Boston Shoe Store, and they had an x-ray machine in there. You could walk in, put your feet in this machine--this was big stuff, you know--you put your feet in that machine, and you could see where your bones were. Now today, you do an x-ray without any kind of protection, you know. Oh, that was a big deal to go. "Could we go in there? Could we get in there and x-ray our feet?" We used to run in, do our feet real quick, and come out. It didn't hurt my feet. That was a big hit, you know, that was. Today in the malls the kids run in, and the kid stores have little entertainment things. You know, you run in and you do your little thing. But there were no malls when we were growing up.

HANK: You know, when I was young, I guess at the age of eight or nine, they decided to pave the roadway that was out in front of the house. Up until that time it was a muddy road, and your closest neighbor was probably 150, 200 feet between you. Mrs. Pollard lived next door to me. That was a seven-acre farm there, which now is covered with houses. The area that we used to have behind the house was woods, but now is taken over with--

MARY: Houses.

HANK: Yes. It's been a big change.

GERMAIN: Anything else?

HANK: Nothing more.

MARY: Well, I lived on Woodland Avenue, parallel to Livingston Avenue, and Hank lived out on Church Lane. So when we got married, we moved out to Church Lane to the family home. So I never really went that far, just from one end of the township to the next. But when we were kids, like I said before, we could ride the bikes all over the place. We'd go all over. And because there wasn't all this housing that there is today, we went to school with the same kids year after year after year. Nobody moved away like they do today. Before the war, we knew almost everybody who lived in North Brunswick because the kids, you know. Neighbors never changed. You had the same neighbors year after year, and they watched us all grow up, and they were a big part of our lives.

HANK: Yes. And the same way on Church Lane. I know you knew everybody, some people by first name, other people by mister or missus, you know. But you knew everybody in the homes that were there. Today your closest neighbors, half of them, you never--

MARY: They don't ever wave to you even.

HANK: They don't want to get involved, I guess. I don't know.

It's kind of discouraging.

GERMAIN: Do you remember your family discussing world events and politics?

MARY: Well, yes and no. I was about ten years old during the war, when the war started. And I'll tell you, we were patriots. You talk about Rosie the Riveter doing to the factories? The kids did so much at home. The country needed scrap iron. We would take a wagon and go from house to house and ask people for their scrap iron. Then we'd take it to school. I was at Livingston Park at the time, which was just a couple of little classrooms. It wasn't the big school it is today. The janitor there, he would weight it in his hands and tell us how much it was worth. Then we were given money for it, usually very little. But we would turn that right into defense stamps. We bought defense stamps at school. When you had a book of defense stamps, it was eighteen seventy-five, and they'd make a bond.

So we saved bonds that way. We also sold bonds. We went from house to house selling bonds. The kids did a very big, very big effort. They had clubs, you know, little competition clubs. We collected I can't tell you how many pounds of--I don't know whether we ever knew how many pounds--of cast iron or metal we collected. After school we'd go out, weekends we'd go out, to all the neighbors, you know, all over the place to get all this scrap iron. That was our big part of the war effort. And, of course, we

had air raid drills, and the fathers were air raid wardens. We'd have an air raid drill at night. We had to have blackout curtains so that when the sirens blew for a air raid drill, there was not one speck of light to show out of your house. You had the furnace, you had to close the damper so it didn't show. No smoking. And we had to pull all these curtains. My father would put on his helmet and his arm band and go out with his flashlight. It was a little scary at times, because we didn't know if this was a drill or maybe this was real.

HANK: It ended up real, you know.

MARY: Not here, dear.

HANK: What was the question that was asked again?

GERMAIN: Do you remember your family discussing world events?

HANK: Yes. My father talked about his time, from time to time, in the service during World War I. It was something that he was very much involved with, the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It was quite a group of guys. The guys got along a lot better then than what they do today. The attitudes of guys that come home....

MARY: Well, people are busier today.

HANK: Well, it's just a different situation.

GERMAIN: Do you ever remember not having enough food to eat?

MARY: Yes, I do, yes. I was born during the Depression. The story tell my children is that my mother--we had a lot of fried potatoes, and she would make scrambled eggs. But when she made scrambled eggs, she always added flour because she thought that that would stick to our ribs. It was an extender. I can remember my father only having work a half a day, and my mother making him a spiced ham sandwich before he left because it was....

HANK: That was the era of Spam.

MARY: No, that was later. Spam came later. Spam came during the war when meat was rationed. See, during the war, food and lots of things were rationed. So your father repaired your shoes forever, and sugar was rationed, meat was rationed. We had meatless Tuesdays where people didn't eat meat. I think today's--well, my kids, I'm sure, would look on it as good sports. But they would consider it a hardship. We never looked at it that way. There was no peer pressure. There was no competition because everybody was in the same boat. So we really grew up, despite these little difficulties, we grew up knowing that we were stronger people; it built character, you know. It really made us stronger. I think we can face a lot of things today because of how we grew up.

HANK: We've had the knowledge of knowing that we've been through some situations that a lot of people have never witnessed. Today parents are-- I won't say that mine were bad in any way--but the parents let the children go ahead and do what they want, and we weren't allowed to do that. They had to know where we were going, period, and what time we were going to be back. That was ____.

MARY: Always carried a nickel for a phone call. Always had that nickel just in case you had to call home. I don't know what a phone call costs today, thirty-five cents? Something like that.

GERMAIN: Now we have cell phones.

MARY: Yes, yes.

GERMAIN: What schools did you go to?

MARY: Well, I started out at Parsons, and we walked, of course. Well, I lived on Haverford Street when I started school. The roads weren't the roads they are today. I'm not sure what road it is today. But it was just a path, and we talked this long path, we crossed a street, and we walked more path. It was almost a direct path straight over to Parsons School. There was a house and a pasture, and we would cut through there, went through there. That was the way, the route. Where the senior building is

today, that used to be the municipal building. We always called it the Pump House because they had a great big water tank there, water tower. I don't know why, but when we had a rain or something--there must have been a brook through there or something.

HANK: It was an underground spring, Mary.

MARY: Because it used to flood. One of the fathers who lived on--I'm not sure of the street today--he used to meet us there. He would pick us up, one by one, and carry us across and set us down on the other side, and we'd go on our way.

HANK: You could go from there.

MARY: We continued on the path, right up to Parsons.

HANK: Yes, but where did you go after Parsons?

MARY: Oh, we lived in Milltown one year. Then I came back; we moved back to North Brunswick, and I went to Livingston Park School, fifth, sixth, and seventh grade. That's all it was up there. But we had the loveliest teachers. Mrs. Delaney was the principal, and she was all for the kids. We really had a delightful grammar, middle school, whatever it is today. She used to plan--of course this was all during the war now--and she used

to plan all these activities. We had a band. We had the Livingston Park School band. We used to have plant sales. We did all kinds of things. She was wonderful. Then at that time Parsons had three eighth grades, so you came back to Parsons for the eighth grade. Then you went down to New Brunswick to Roosevelt Junior High for ninth grade. Then you went up to New Brunswick High School for the--

HANK: Remaining three years.

MARY: Three years. So I graduated from New Brunswick High School. Every time we go down Livingston Avenue now, I have to point out this is where Granny went to high school. It's gotten to be a family joke now. My granddaughter says, "Every building we pass is where Granny went to high school." I say, "Well, just so you know I did go to New Brunswick High School that's up there now." I graduated from New Brunswick High School.

HANK: I started out in Maple Meade School, which was just about exactly, almost exactly, a mile from home. We used to walk that in all kinds of weather. I went from there to--graduated eighth grade and went to Parsons School. And from Parsons School to Roosevelt Junior High and started a year at the high school, and enlisted in the Navy on my seventeenth birthday. And that took care of going back to school. But I was lucky. Just recently I got my GED.

MARY: From Governor Whitman.

HANK: Yes, Christie Whitman. Everybody that had service time that didn't get finished up, you had to have a certain amount of service time and overseas service, she gave everybody that didn't have the high school diploma, gave them a GED.

MARY: When I went to Livingston Park, we walked. And we walked all over the place. Nobody gave a thought to it because there was no choice, and we never thought. We lived just inside the two-mile limit. And when it would rain or heavy snow or something, we'd walk down two blocks, and then you could ride the school bus. There was a lady down there. She used to let us all stand up on her porch when it rained until the bus came. Then we would ride the bus, and the bus driver didn't care, you know. They were very nice people. So then we would ride the bus up to Livingston Park. In back where the school is now, that was all just woods and playground. We had a playground. The other side was some little houses. They were very poor. It was a very poor area. Never bothered us.

HANK: You didn't look at their means. You looked at the person.

MARY: No, there was no problem. And, for goodness sake, there was no problem with black people. You know, we had black kids in

school. Nobody knew the difference, you know, really, it was such an ideal way of living compared to today. Now today everything is--you need to have a whole new education to live today almost. And it was growing up during the war that did it. You know, people on our street, there were servicemen on our street that were killed in the war, and we all sympathized with the families. We tried to--everybody stuck together and tried to comfort. How could you? You know, you really can't comfort. But we were all behind all these people. For a little short street we had, there were a lot of casualties.

GERMAIN: What did you wear to school?

MARY: Dresses.

HANK: What did we wear to school?

MARY: Yes. We weren't allowed to wear pants, I'll tell you. Our legs used to freeze by the time we walked over to Parsons. I can remember walking up to Livingston Park, my legs being so cold by the time I got to school, they stung. Then somebody in the eighth grade got a good idea: Let's wear slacks under our dresses or skirts. When we get to school, we'll take them off. That's what we did, yes.

HANK: In the early years, you went back to the knickers, if you

know what knickers are. It's like golfing pants some golfers wear today.

MARY: Plus high socks.

HANK: Yes, knee-high socks and the knickers. Usually you had a sweater and a coat in the cold weather. It got to the point you didn't notice it as much as what a lot of kids today complain about it being cold. There was more snow then, and it was colder then. Made quite a difference. But we were lucky in a way. There was one man lived across the lake from us, lived in New Brunswick. He would come just about the time, if the snow was bad, if they'd had snow or it was raining, that he knew where we would start walking. He'd pick us up and deliver us to school in his car so that we wouldn't be too drowned or frozen by the time we got there.

MARY: You know, with clothes, you didn't run out to the store every time you wanted something new. We wore hand-me-downs. If you had an older sister or something, when they finished with their outfits, they were passed down. Everybody did this. You know, like I said, we had no peer pressure because of the situation of the country, and....

HANK: My first Boy Scout uniform was a hand-me-down from a man that my father worked with. It was his son that grew out of it.

And, you know, I thought nothing about putting on second hand.

MARY: No, nobody thought anything of it. And we didn't say, oh, we have hand-me-downs. It was sharing. We were sharing. I can remember a snowsuit I absolutely hated. I hate it when my sister wore it, and I hated it when I wore it. It was brown, and it had an orange stripe at the top. I absolutely hated that suit. But it was warm. It kept us warm because we had wool then, you know. Everything was nice wool.

GERMAIN: Where have you lived as an adult?

HANK: Well, I lived on Church Lane until I went into the service. Came home after service time. Lucky enough to get home. I lived in Milltown for seven years after that. And the rest of the time it's been the homestead on Church Lane. We didn't move. My parents, after my father died, it was just my mother and I at home. My brother had already gotten married.

MARY: I lived in North Brunswick except for one year, that's all. I've lived in North Brunswick all my life except for that one year. We lived on Haverford Street until the end of second grade, I guess. Then we lived in Milltown for one year. Then back to North Brunswick, and I'm still in North Brunswick.

GERMAIN: So you're still on Church Lane?

MARY: Yes, we live on Church Lane. Yes.

GERMAIN: I live on Peppermint Hill Road.

MARY: Yes, that's just before us. You live over there? Well, that's a new development. That's part of our woods, but we'll let that go.

GERMAIN: We didn't build the house. It was already there.... Was there a reason you decided to stay in North Brunswick?

MARY: Well, yes, I guess because when we got married, we moved in with Mrs. Schipmann. We bought the house from her, and we stayed, you know. Never thought of going anywhere else. Hank worked in Milltown, so it was handy for him. I don't know. I never thought of that before.

HANK: The only reason you moved was to come over to Church Lane.

MARY: Yes, because we got married.

GERMAIN: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

MARY: North Carolina, Delaware, Alaska. I wanted to homestead in

Alaska in 1959 when it became a state, but that didn't work out. But to tell you the truth, our children and our great-grandchildren live right within ten minutes of us, so we're not going anywhere. We're staying exactly where we are. We see our daughters all the time, we see our grandchildren all the time.

HANK: And we're thankful that they are as close as they are. When they're needed, why, bingo, they're right there. ____.

MARY: We're still very close, you know. I came from a very close family. My family has developed into a very close family. I think our girls are their own best friends yet, you know. It's fun. No complaints.

HANK: Something comes up, one will get on the telephone, call the other three. The next thing you know, they're all there. Sons-in-law as well.

MARY: Yes. But with Hank's health, it's been a big help to have them all right by.

GERMAIN: Can you describe your general health?

MARY: Don't ask.

HANK: It's a bungalow.

MARY: Now, our health, you said, right? A house?

GERMAIN: Health.

MARY: Yes, that's why I said, don't ask. You'll be here for two hours more.

HANK: My health was good until '91. Then I had a heart attack in '95 and open-heart surgery. There was a hernia operation. In general, it could have been a lot better. And today I've had problems walking and balance. Other than that, I feel pretty good.

GERMAIN: You feel good?

MARY: I don't seem to have any problems yet.

HANK: My nurse.

MARY: Well, we all have problems. We all have backaches. We all have headaches or something sooner or later, once in a while. But I don't have anything to complain about.

HANK: Look at what's happened to a change lifestyle, that's all.

MARY: We keep our changing our lifestyle, yes. But that's all right because we go from one thing to another. When one door closes, you know, another one opens, and that's the way it's been for us. The Lord has been very good to us. We've had lots of opportunities we never thought we'd have, and we were able to take advantage of them. And we've enjoyed them all. When you can't do it anymore, then you can't do it anymore. Something else will come along.

HANK: Find something else to do. We often--our whole family has done volunteer work in one way or another. I've got forty-eight years on the _____ Fire Department of North Brunswick. I had two daughters, when they were living at home, that were on the squad. Like I said, we were active. We were lucky with the things we were able to do. I will say this much: For four girls, I think I'd rather than four girls than four boys from what I've been able to find out.

MARY: We like doing volunteer work. We don't do the hospitals or anything like that. What we've been doing is in the summers, we volunteer as hosts in the state parks' campgrounds. So we hosted-- We did eleven years at Assateague Island in Maryland, and we did three winters--three delightful winters--in Florida. But we work for the state parks. Right now we're doing volunteer work at the Princeton Battlefield State Park. The Thomas Clarke House on the property is a museum, and we docent there. But there was a

long, big, huge loom that needed restoring, and Hank just about got that finished. He's been doing that. We belong to two organizations: One was metal-detecting, which we had to kind of pass that up for a few things. But we were doing some archaeology work at Monmouth Battlefield State Park. Yes, we did a couple of digs there. And we were hoping to do one shortly at Princeton. We did a couple--we did one in Virginia.

HANK: George Washington's birthplace.

MARY: Yes. So hopefully we'll continue. We love that, we like doing that. That's what our interest is, in the history. We do a lot of work for the church. Right now we're on hold. We belong to Georges Road Baptist Church, of which you have that lovely picture. We've done a lot of work there, trustees, property committee, one thing or the other. We've done that for years and years. And teaching Sunday School. But right now we're taking a break. How long that'll last--probably a couple of weeks or something. Then we'll be back to it.

GERMAIN: So would you say you're pretty religious?

MARY: Spiritual.

HANK: Yes, yes.

MARY: Rather than religious. That's _____ term.

GERMAIN: Have you ever had supernatural or psychic happenings?

MARY and HANK: No, no.

GERMAIN: Have you ever been convicted of a crime?

MARY: No. This is getting good.

HANK: No, no. I don't want to see _____. But I had to go and look at different areas when I was involved in the fire company back in the early sixties and seventies. To see the conditions that are there, I don't know why some people don't wise up and stay away from them.

GERMAIN: How old were you when you started dating?

MARY: Each other or anybody?

GERMAIN: Anybody. Or each other.

HANK: I started when I was stationed in Virginia. There was a buddy of mine who lived in Baltimore. We'd get weekends off, and we used to run up to Baltimore. And there was a girl there that took a liking to me. That lasted 'til I got overseas. Then I got

a Dear John letter. I guess I've had dates with three other girls, but none of them materialized. Other than that, I met Mary, and....

MARY: I think I was nineteen when I-- I don't remember dating through high school. I did. I went to the prom, I know that.

GERMAIN: Did you start to date after the war?

MARY: Oh, yes, we started dating in 1953, I think, and we got married in '57.

GERMAIN: Has there ever been anyone in your life that you would consider to be your kindred soul mate?

MARY: My husband. Say "your wife."

HANK: That's about it, you know. We've had what I would call a very good marriage, with its ups and downs, and made a family. The daughters, I have no complaints on the daughters. They were very good to raise. We had our house rules.

MARY: Yes, we didn't have any problems raising kids.

HANK: And this is what you went by. You went by the house rules. Not somebody would come home and say, well, so-and-so's got this

on, so-and-so's got that. I'd say, "I'm sorry. You know the rules."

MARY: Somebody else's mother, you know-- Well, somebody else's mother-- Well, I never met somebody else's mother. But they were very good. We had rules, as Hank says, and they followed the rules. I mean they weren't always happy with them, but they did what we-- Wearing jeans to school was the biggest one. I absolutely forbid wearing jeans to school because they were just coming into style, and to me jeans were backyard clothes. Now jeans are a fashion statement, so it makes a big difference, you know. But at the time they were still backyard clothes, and I would not permit it. And they survived, you know.

HANK: Up until the time they were married, if they went someplace other than where they said they were when they left, I wanted a phone call to know that they were changing from one place to another. Because if I needed them for any reason, I wanted to know where I was able to get a hold of them. And up until the time they were married, they followed through with it.

MARY: We had no reason not to trust them. They were good kids. Still are. [BREAK

GERMAIN: How many children do you have?

MARY: We have four daughters.

GERMAIN: Can you tell me about them?

MARY: Well, we've been talking about them right along, you know. Two of them are back in North Brunswick. I have three grand--

[Change to Side B of Tape]

GERMAIN: What did you want to be when you grew up?

MARY: Oh, I wanted to be an Olympic ice skater, figure skater. Sonja Henie was it, and that's what I wanted to do. And then I wanted to be-- That was, of course, the highlight. I've always all my life wanted to be an archaeologist. Always. And finally, about fifteen, twenty years ago, I got the opportunity to start, to do that. The first thing I found was a skeleton.

HANK: I never really had specific job that I wanted or profession, whatever you want to call it. I ended up doing basically carpentry, cabinet-work. Then I joined the Johnson & Johnson thing _____ in Milltown and Chicopee. It was supposed to be temporary in February. I figured it would get me through the winter months, and I'd go back out on my own again. Well, thirty-three years later the temporary ended. So, you know, I feel that what I was able to do was pretty much what I initially wanted to do. So I feel very fortunate in that way, too.

GERMAIN: You were in the military, the Navy, right?

HANK: Mmmm hmmm.

GERMAIN: Which branch?

HANK: Of the Navy? What do you mean?

GERMAIN: I'm so confused. The military has branches?

HANK: Yes. Back then you either-- What happened was during World War II, most everybody that went into the Navy or went into the Army, you were considered Reserve, and you had U.S. Navy-R, USNR, behind your name. And that's the way it was.

MARY: But it was called the service then.

HANK: Yes.

MARY: This military is a recent title, and there was no Air Force. There was Air Force, but it was under the Army.

HANK: The Army Air Corps.

MARY: Now it's a separate thing.

HANK: I had boot camp in Virginia. Went from Virginia to a different job there. Joined the amphibious forces and went from there to the Philippines.

GERMAIN: Did you volunteer or were you--?

HANK: I volunteered on my seventeenth birthday. I volunteered on the 12th of June. The 7th of July I was on my way.

MARY: Was there a reason you wanted to join on that day?

HANK: Well, yes. My father was in the Army, and he talked about the conditions of living during World War II--World War I rather. He felt that it would be better to go in the Navy because at least you're going to have a dry bed to sleep in and conditions are going to be a lot better. He just didn't want me exposed to the battlefield, in a sense. Of course you get your battles no matter where you go. That was basically why I went to the Navy.

GERMAIN: Did you fight, get into real combat like?

HANK: Yes. I was involved with seven amphibious assault landings in the Philippines. I went back went with MacArthur. In fact, I went there with MacArthur, I should say. It was from Leyte to Luzon to Corregidor, all the islands. We hit at least one sub

twice. We carried 200 troops and eight Army officers. And that's basically what my job was. I'm very happy and feel very lucky that we survived it. Because there was a thing that when we left the Gulf, we took the ship for a shakedown cruise, we had dolphins on our bow. When it was time to go through the canal, we had dolphins on our bow there. And when we pulled into New Guinea, we had dolphins on our bow there. And they kept saying it's a good luck omen. Well, out of the twelve ships that were given to MacArthur--as an admiral, though, MacArthur could be a snake--we also were considered expendable services and that's why they turned us over to the Army. But I've had my share.

GERMAIN: How has serving in the military affected your outlook on life and the war?

MARY: He thinks everybody should have basic--young men should have basic training.

HANK: Yes, at least when you finish high school, if you're not going further on for education, at least a year, maybe two years. It'll teach discipline and you'll gain a lot more respect for human nature. There were people in-- And people are different. On the ship I was on there was a colored steward. _____. I loved to hear him sing. He was always singing. We got along well. His color made no difference.

MARY: That's what I said when we were in school. I don't know who started this business about the black people and all, but we had--they were all of us, we were all the same. There was no problems like that.

HANK: Before I left Virginia, they brought in a group of black Navy men. We were assigned one across to show them the job that we were doing. And this is basically what we did. Nobody knew at the time that there was an ulterior motive behind it, but we were going to be taken out, and they were going to take over our space. But that's it.

GERMAIN: How would you describe yourself politically?

MARY: Out of it. We're not into politics whatsoever. We vote for the person we think--I'm speaking for myself--for the candidate I think can do the best job, regardless of what party. And I don't get involved whatever in politics.

HANK: I never had straight ballot. I've always had alternates that I felt were better qualified. And that's the way I've gone. Politics-- You get involved with it somewhere along the line, you either get like certain people or you get out. So that's it.

GERMAIN: So you can't classify yourself as conservative or liberal?

MARY: No.

HANK: No, not really.

MARY: You can in some situations, candidate situations whatever.

GERMAIN: What U.S. president have you admired the most?

MARY: I liked Eisenhower and I also liked Jimmy Carter. I think they did the most.

GERMAIN: In what way?

MARY: Carter, instead of being radical, if you want to call it radical, like some of the presidents are gung-ho today, I think he was a statesman. He was very good. A statesman I think Carter was.

HANK: He had military training just like Eisenhower did.

MARY: Yes, I didn't think of that.

HANK: He got through Annapolis, then he became an officer and a gentleman. He and Eisenhower are the two that I admire the most. And yet I think that the one that was in before George--the movie

actor.

MARY: Reagan?

HANK: Reagan, Ronald Reagan, did a helluva job while he was in. I think it was through him that they helped to get the Berlin Wall to come down. That in itself is an experience that, you know, is really a great thing, as far as I'm concerned. Because those people were separated, you know. The whole world has changed since the wall came down. Small nations are backed against, and some are feuding--fighting. So no matter what you do, some people are always looking for somebody else's job; somebody's higher up, they want somebody else's job. Lots of times when they get it, they can't handle it. Consequently, they end up with war.

MARY: Don't you want to know about North Brunswick?

GERMAIN: ____.

MARY: Mill Lane is now Hermann Road. Don't you want to know all those things?

GERMAIN: I'm getting there.

HANK: She's getting there.

MARY: Seems to me we're way off the track of North Brunswick.

GERMAIN: Well, by the town, you mean like your growing up. That has to do with North Brunswick because you grew up in North Brunswick. What changes in technology have occurred during your lifetime?

MARY: Everything. We were talking before about shopping malls. That's number one. Going to the mall to shop. You said about clothing. We'd go into New Brunswick. Now you go to the malls. We have all these automobiles; everybody's got a car. You can go anywhere to shop. You can go anywhere for entertainment. Cell phones. We had, when I lived at home, we had a regular old tall phone with the speaker here, and you'd put it to your ear this way. And that's what we started out. Then the phones progressed. Then you had the desk phone that was a little modern thing and a wall phone. Now you have cells phones. It's all that. Television. We didn't have TV. We had portable radio. We had a standing radio. But then we did have a little portable one we kept in the kitchen and listened to WNEW all the time, which is now, I understand, changed a bit. What else? Everything is new. Microwaves, toaster oven. I don't know about electric stoves, that might have been. I don't know. We always had a gas stove.

HANK: I think electric stoves were out before gas.

MARY: Our gas stove when I was little was a Roper. I remember the name. It was gray and green, and it stood on legs. It had legs, and it had a burner here, and the ovens were here. The oven and broiler were on the side. So look what you have today, you know. You have these modern-- You don't have a standing stove. You have burners set into a counter. Everything is changed.

HANK: What we had was, basically, I remember, is a kerosene stove in the kitchen. The oven was down the bottom, and there was a tank on the left-hand side. That was filled with water, and that's where our hot water came from. We sponge bathed. We didn't have showers. Bathroom facilities, you ran outside because there was no such thing in the house until later on in years.

MARY: We had inside plumbing. We didn't have outside; we had inside.

HANK: Well, we had running water; that was it. And then we got hot running water and gradually progressed along the way.

MARY: We had furnaces until after the war and oil burners came into popularity. Instead of the coal man coming, we had an oil delivery, right? We had radiators. I have radiators in my house now, and I love them. You've got to have a radiator.

HANK: Steam radiators. Steam heaters _____. And people went from oil to gas. A gas furnace is about one third of the size of what the oil burner was.

MARY: Yes. We used to have this great, big cast-iron stove, furnace, in your cellar. Now you have a little box down there now. Not four o'clock yet, is it?

HANK: No.

GERMAIN: Now, I'm getting into North Brunswick. As a child, which parks of the township did you play in? Were there any parks?

MARY: No. Parks in the township. I don't remember any. I don't remember there ever being a park.

GERMAIN: Do you remember when the first one was built?

HANK: The only thing you had was behind the school, Maple Meade School, we had a--that was the closest thing to a park.

MARY: Yes, but that was out here. We had over here--now we're getting back to Mill Lane again--before it became Hermann Road it was Mill Lane. Hermann Forwarding was a garage and a parking lot. Next door to there was a man, an old gentleman named George

Babbage, and he wanted a skating pond for the kids. So alongside of his house he had this pond dug. And we used to come all, walk all the way--it was across the street from Parsons School--walked all the way over there to go ice skating. Then I'm not sure how or when they developed Babbage Park as it is today. But there also was a big pond here. That brook over there, they dammed that up, and that was a big skating pond, too.

GERMAIN: Is Babbage Park named after him?

MARY: Yes. And then all these other little development parks have come up. But when I was-- No, there wasn't any that I can remember. I can't remember a park.

HANK: Activities were minimal, to say the least.

MARY: Well, we roller skated in the street. We did things like that. Kids don't do that today. But we did roller skating on my path.

HANK: We roller skated, too.

MARY: But you only had one street. We had a lot of streets.

HANK: Yes, that's true. Had to come in and get concrete covering other than the muddy road, why....

MARY: Kids from the whole neighborhood, a couple of blocks away, all used to always pal around together. We would manage to end up on somebody's porch, and we would play games. At night we played hide-and-go-seek until the street lights were on; then you had to go in. And baseball. Down where there's houses now, when they extended Woodland Avenue all the way down, on the one field there we had a baseball diamond--a homemade kind of thing, you know. Kids came from Livingston Park area all over, just after school, we'd have a baseball game. We'd play 'til it got dark and dinnertime, and then they'd go home. But we did our own thing.

HANK: We had a baseball field across the street, across Church Lane, down where Willitz[sp?] live, in that area right there, to the point where the older guys had a team set up, and they would play every Saturday and Sunday, different teams. At one time they were having a game, they heard this airplane. And what happened, the Piper Cub, is what it was, had engine problems. It came down and landed on the baseball field. They had to take the wings off it so they could get it out and get it back to the airport.

MARY: I remember during the war over in-- I don't know what it's called now. It used to be called the Poor Farm over on Georges Road right in back of what was the Middlesex County rehabilitation--

HANK: Rehabilitation center, yes.

MARY: The building is still standing in the back. But throughout that whole other area beyond that was all fields. Two fighter planes were having a practice dogfight, and they landed over there. Oh, we all ran over there, you know. Here they came down, and we all ran over there to see them. It was a big, exciting thing. Everything is all houses today.

HANK: One thing that I remember about 130 and Route 1 when it was a crossroad. There was a house on the left-hand side going south on 130, on the corner, and he had groundhogs underneath his front porch. He used to call them, and they would come out, and he would feed them from his hand. It was quite a thing to see something like this happen, you know. Usually they run wild, and you don't get a chance to get that close to them. But he was able to make them so much domesticated.

MARY: I remember down the end of Serviss Avenue was the water treatment plant. You could go down there, and climb the fence, and look at the water and different things. There was a brook down. The brook is still there. At one time there was a lot of water in the brook, and some boys in the neighborhood made a canoe. We took it down there and launched it in the brook and went under Livingston Avenue by the sewer. We went around Livingston Avenue and around over there. Sleigh ride--we'd always

sleigh ride onto Hollywood Street. All these beautiful hills to sleigh ride. And there weren't cars to worry about, so you'd go at night.

HANK: Over on Church Lane was beautiful for sleigh riding, too.

MARY: I remember once sleigh riding on Church Lane. Only once.

HANK: It's been a long time since it's been available that they can do something like that. But it was--day and night. People'd come home from work, and they'd come down and go sleigh riding. And that's a thing of the past.

MARY: You can't do it now. Too many cars on the road.

HANK: They didn't have the snowplows that they have today. Consequently, the snow got packed down, and it would get a glazed top on it. And you could have an awful lot of fun with a sleigh. Belly-flopping.

MARY: Three or four kids on top of each other. Falling off on the way down, you know. We had a lot of good times, as kids and as young people, without the modern things that young people have today. Of course there was no TV, so you weren't acquainted with that. I remember my girlfriend's uncle had a little TV about this big. He used to sit in this big chair and watch his little TV. We

used to all line up in back of his chair and peek over his shoulder. You could hardly see it, but we were so impressed. We thought, wow, look at this, you know.

HANK: Now they're sixty inches.

GERMAIN: You got along with your neighbors?

MARY: Oh, yes, yes.

HANK: Yes.

MARY: And we never locked doors. You never locked your door. Your parents would go out or you'd go out, and you'd come home, and the door would be open. Lots of times we'd come home from school and my mother would be at a meeting or something, and there'd be one of the neighbors sitting in the living room waiting for her to come home. Make coffee or tea. We'd come home. Everybody was very friendly.

HANK: It was open house.

MARY: Extremely friendly, yes. You got to know your neighbors real well. They knew us as we grew up. It was a friendly old neighborhood.

GERMAIN: Do you think North Brunswick has changed for the better or worse?

HANK: That can go both ways.

MARY: Yes. Overgrown too much, too much.

HANK: Too much housing.

MARY: Too much housing has been allowed in the town. It's caused a school problem.

HANK: It's these developments. Single houses aren't so bad. But when you start getting these condominiums, they're too much. They had to know--somebody had to know--that they were going to end up with school problems.

MARY: Well, what could you expect, you know? North Brunswick is growing. Oh, well, we grew, we outgrew. We've gone too far. We've made progress in other areas. Brought a lot of industry, a lot of companies. It used to be--North Brunswick was under New Brunswick mailing because nobody ever heard of North Brunswick. Now we have our own post office. We have a zip code. So that shows a lot of growth. When I first came out to Church Lane, it was an RFD, Box so-and-so, Box 388 it was. And we had a party line, Milltown-8 whatever, M-1 or R-1 or something.

HANK: There were two on a line.

MARY: Yes. You'd pick up the phone, and you could hear other people talking.

HANK: If the other party was on there, you'd hang it back up. But then you'd take your chance to get in there before they'd make another call so you could make your call.

MARY: Yes, it was a party line.

HANK: People, like I said, the area was open. Some inconveniences you probably could have done without. But to have the association with the neighbors and stuff, was a part that has been lost.

GERMAIN: What changes would you make if you were in office in the township?

MARY: Well, I always said if I were ever president and could really make a rule, it's probably very silly to a lot of people, but you know what disgusts me? Seeing chewing gum squashed on the sidewalks. You know, brand-new places, chewing gum squashed on them. I wouldn't allow that. You couldn't spit out your gum on the street.

HANK: I haven't had any desire for politics in any way.

GERMAIN: Well, if you could just make any changes in the community.

HANK: Changes. At this point it's--

MARY: Stop the growth, period.

HANK: At this point there's been so much done, so much damage done, that it would be tough to say where you start first. That's the way I see it.

GERMAIN: How has living in North Brunswick made you a better person?

MARY: Says who? Who says I'm a better person? I don't know how.

HANK: Well, I don't feel that I'm better. I'm willing to help anybody that's got a problem, and I don't look at something to be in return for what I do to help.

MARY: We were educated in North Brunswick schools, and it was a fine education. But probably what I learned in the eighth grade my grandchildren are learning in the fifth and sixth grades, you

know. Education has come a long way.

HANK: I think there should be some type of curfew for certain ages in the town, and I think it should be strictly enforced. But that's just me.

MARY: See, out where we are, we don't run into too many of those problems. It's more the end of North Brunswick. This end--not exactly even this end.

HANK: Well, behind the high school and over by U.S. 1.

MARY: Yes, right. They have a lot of problems.

HANK: The apartments and stuff, the complexes.

MARY: Twenty-seven, over there.

HANK: To me, when I think of it, it's pulled North Brunswick down. It's not the....

MARY: I don't know what our crime rate is, do you?

WOMAN: No, I don't know.

MARY: But more or less out where we are, we don't have that--

Well, now wait a minute, what goes on in those new developments, I don't know. But generally, from just living in the area, there doesn't seem to be too much of a problem.

HANK: No, no.

GERMAIN: If you could convey one thought or idea to the entire township, what would it be?

MARY: Well, that takes a little thought. A spur-of-the-moment question. That we keep our politics honest.

HANK: There's been so much done that, you know, at this point I really couldn't answer that and be honest about it, really. I could guess a couple of different things, but I wouldn't want to comment on that.

GERMAIN: Okay. Thank you very much.

MARY: You're welcome.

HANK: You're quite welcome.

[End of Interview]